

## Einstein is Alive

By Patrick Hurley

The action of the play takes place in the past, present, and future all at the same time, as a family, and the victim himself, tries to cope with suicide. It's a story about how we can get trapped in the moments in life that define who we were, who we are, and who will become.

### ***Cast of Characters***

RUSSELL THOMPSON, a twenty five year old average looking guy.

ELAINE STONE, complacent, sweet Aunt of Russell's.

NICOLE THOMPSON, Russell's overbearing mother, is a few years older than Elaine.

MELISSA BROOKS, attractive friend of Elaine's, very bubbly and outspoken.

EDNA STONE, Nicole and Elaine's mother in her late sixties, very stern and religious.

TONY BROOKS, Melissa's husband, an average businessman.

JESUS CHRIST, a typical vision of Jesus.

JACK, a young homeless man.

ALBERT EINSTEIN, a typical vision of Einstein.

Act One- Three different times; the night of a Russell's suicide, the day of his funeral, and five years later.

Act Two- Three different times; the same night of Russell's suicide, a few days after his funeral, and five years later.

**Act One**

*There are three separate settings, a bedroom, a kitchen, and a living room. Russell Thompson (25) sits on his bed in his bedroom. Elaine Stone (50) and Nicole Thompson (late 40's) enter the kitchen. Tony Brooks (50's) sits on the couch in the living room.*

RUSSELL

Fuck!

TONY

Shit!

NICOLE

Son of a bitch!

RUSSELL

Where the hell is it?

TONY

Where the hell is she?

NICOLE

What in the hell is this?

RUSSELL

Fuck!

TONY

Shit!

NICOLE

Son of a bitch!

RUSSELL

*(To audience)*

Here we go again, huh? We must stop meeting like this. Or this might be the first time for some of you. So welcome! I want this to be eloquent and excessive. I've always imagined that my last scene would be an evocative expression of loquacious precision. There's something about contradiction that appeals to my sense of order. I've imagined this for some time now. You see I have this gift. I call it a gift because curse has such negative connotations to it. I can see the future. It's happening right

now. And so, because of this gift, I am able to invite you to share this moment with me, a moment that will change the course of the future as we know it. Well, as you know it, or would know it. I already know it. It's confusing. It all comes down to this one last moment.

ELAINE

Nicole, why don't you sit down? Do you want me to help you with something? Aren't you tired?

NICOLE

I'm busy. Who brings potato salad to a funeral?

RUSSELL

That's my mother, Nicole and her sister, my aunt Elaine. Aren't they fun? They're about five days in the future from where we are right now. Well, where I am. They don't seem sad enough.

ELAINE

Nicole?

NICOLE

Why did you wear that dress?

ELAINE

What do you mean? What's wrong with it?

NICOLE

You look like a war widow. Seriously, doesn't anyone know how to cook anything that isn't disgusting? I can't even tell what this is!

ELAINE

Nicole?

NICOLE

I don't want to talk.

*Melissa Brooks (40's) enters the living room*

RUSSELL

Oh, and over there. That's Melissa. She's a friend of my aunt Elaine. And that's her husband Tony. They're farther in the future than my mom and aunt. They are serving as an effect to our cause. Kinda cool isn't it? They're even more fun.

TONY

You think you took long enough?

MELISSA

Is that all you have to say to me?

TONY

Melissa, you know I have to make a good impression tonight. This fundraiser is a really important part of my job.

MELISSA

I smell smoke. Are you smoking?

TONY

I don't smoke.

MELISSA

Of course not, it must be my inability to cohesively rationalize the fact that what I'm actually smelling is my hope that you're smoking.

TONY

I would try to respond to that, but I don't have enough of a chemical imbalance to match wits with you tonight, darling.

MELISSA

How do I look, Tony?

TONY

You look fine.

MELISSA

High praise indeed.

TONY

I didn't know you were fishing for praise, pumpkin.

MELISSA

I didn't know I had to, shnookums.

TONY

Melissa, we're late! Can we please go?

MELISSA

Why did I just spend two hours prepping myself if my own husband isn't even going to notice?

TONY

I don't know. You have an uncanny ability to make everything about you?

MELISSA

I'm not going until you compliment me.

ELAINE

Nicole, what can I do? Do you need anything?

NICOLE

Mom didn't even bring flowers. It's like she won't even acknowledge it. And she told Bill and his wife that he was hit by a truck.

ELAINE

Well, you know how mom is. She can't handle things like this—

NICOLE

Whatever! Take her side. You always do.

MELISSA

These walls are so white. Jesus Christ! How have I not noticed this before? They make eggshells look tan. I'm still waiting for that compliment.

TONY

Melissa, please.

MELISSA

It's not that difficult. I did my hair, I waxed my legs, I got a manicure. My skin may be a slightly different color from that tanning salon. Anything?

TONY

I was picking up on a strange tangerine tint.

MELISSA

Is that really what you're going to say?

TONY

We're going to be late, Melissa. I'll compliment you in the car.

MELISSA

Do you like this room?

ELAINE

I wasn't taking her side, you know.

NICOLE

I really don't want to talk about mom.

TONY

I really don't want to talk about the room.

MELISSA

I hate it. It's awful. It's like being trapped inside a literal interpretation of white noise. It's like some awful waiting room.

TONY

Speaking of waiting—

MELISSA

I want to talk. Communication is important, honey.

TONY

So is punctuality, love bug!

MELISSA

Forget it.

ELAINE

You know, I'm just trying to help—

NICOLE

Why won't you just stop talking.

TONY

I'm going now. It's real simple, the car is in the driveway. Would you please follow me?

*Tony exits.*

ELAINE

Do you want something to eat?

NICOLE

Seriously, you can't stop talking, can you?

ELAINE

I'm sorry. I just, I feel like all the silences are...it's just so much quiet all the time.

NICOLE

I'll just go outside. Please don't follow me.

*Nicole exits.*

RUSSELL

See what I mean? Fun! Look at the two of them, poor lost souls. Another really cool part of this is that I get to hear what they're thinking.

ELAINE

Why is it always so quiet?

MELISSA

What is wrong with me?

RUSSELL

Or at least, It's what I imagine they're thinking. This whole experiment may be nothing more than a delusion on my part, but I like to think it's a time space continuum thing. Where was I? Ah yes! The raison d'être. Isn't it fun not knowing though? The mystery—

ELAINE

What are we afraid to say? Why can't we just say it?

MELISSA

The fucking whiteness! It's like living in a cloud.

RUSSELL

*(Overlapping)*

I'm going to kill myself.

ELAINE

*(Overlapping)*

My nephew killed himself.

MELISSA

*(Overlapping)*

My husband's cheating on me.

RUSSELL

Tonight.

ELAINE

It can't get us.

MELISSA

That fucker!

ELAINE

But, we're not supposed to say it out loud. I can say it to myself.

MELISSA

Now I'm talking to myself.

RUSSELL

At least I have myself to talk to.

MELISSA

He's been cheating on me for five years. What does that say about me?

ELAINE

This all feels so familiar. Most of my life is the same day in and day out. What does that say about me?

RUSSELL

Ah, the flawed human belief that we are the center of the universe. But, how do we connect it all? Is there some magic behind it? Or does coincidence rule our idea of fate? Oh yeah, the funeral they're at. It's mine.

MELISSA

I was driving down the street this morning when I saw this homeless guy. He was holding a sign, some handmade cardboard sign that said "Einstein is Alive."

RUSSELL

Sometimes people don't know how to read the signs.

ELAINE

How long have I sat here? How many times have I gone through this?

RUSSELL

She's not up to speed yet.

MELISSA

Why Einstein? I was confused as to the request he was making. I'm used to seeing signs that say "anything helps", or "will

work for food", I once saw a sign that said "Veteran with VD seeks same", but nothing like this.

RUSSELL

And sometimes the signs are there, because they are. Sometimes there is no reason. There is no distinction between the past and the future. They are exquisitely absolute, balancing on either end of an imaginary scale of the blindfolded mistress known as the present.

MELISSA

I'm probably trying to make it mean something. It's probably nothing.

ELAINE

*(Reading a card on the table)*

With deepest sympathy for you at this trying time.

RUSSELL

Which time is real then? Am I projecting the future, or just reliving something that can't be changed? Or are they creating what they think the past was?

ELAINE

Why did he do it?

MELISSA

But for some reason, there he was. Today of all days. It must mean something.

*Melissa and Elaine exit*

*There's a knock on Russell's door.*

RUSSELL

Maybe we're all just trapped in someone else's idea. Maybe the world can change with one thought. Or maybe I've had too much to drink. Maybe we'll never know.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Russell, open this door.

RUSSELL

Well, enough exposition! Before we can get to the beautiful climax, and inevitable denouement we have to have the scenes with the concerned relatives doing their best to intercede. You know the rising action.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Russell, I mean it.

RUSSELL

Let the fun begin.

*Russell opens the door. Nicole enters.*

NICOLE

What right do you have to lock this door?

RUSSELL

The fourth amendment.

NICOLE

Oh you're so witty. Thank God you're honing your astute sense of humor in my root cellar. When was the last time you went outside? You have no pigmentation left in your skin.

RUSSELL

I'm heliophobic! Way to be sensitive, mom.

NICOLE

Do you think being cynical all the time is a way to get anything out of this world?

RUSSELL

Yes.

NICOLE

If you'd stop using all your energy trying to be clever, perhaps you wouldn't be living this pathetic lifestyle.

RUSSELL

I hate to break it to you, mother, but living a pasty, sun-fearing existence in a root cellar is not a lifestyle. I can just imagine how awkward it would be for you if I did emerge to attend one of your church functions. Have you met my son, the turnip?

NICOLE

I think you should see Father Burke.

RUSSELL

Mother, please.

NICOLE

Yes! A little more Christ in your life is exactly what you need to get out of this embryonic tomb.

RUSSELL

A little more Christ?

NICOLE

You live like one of those terrorists in a sleeper cell.

RUSSELL

Nice comparison.

NICOLE

Hiding never helped anyone!

RUSSELL

Tell that to Anne Frank.

NICOLE

That's not funny, Russell.

RUSSELL

I'll work on my material.

NICOLE

This is disgusting. Look how you live! You have no idea how disappointed the Lord is with you.

RUSSELL

Tell him to send a postcard.

NICOLE

I need you to get out of this room, out of this cellar. Out of this house!

RUSSELL

Are you kicking me out?

NICOLE

You haven't even been to church in years.

RUSSELL

So, I've never been to Detroit.

NICOLE

What does that mean?

RUSSELL

Oh, I thought we were just arbitrarily pointing things out now.  
I don't like bananas.

NICOLE

Russell!

RUSSELL

My urine was clear this morning.

NICOLE

You have to leave! I'm sorry. I know this sounds cold, but I  
can't watch you destroy your life anymore.

RUSSELL

Where should I go?

NICOLE

That's not my problem, is it?

RUSSELL

Oh, I get it. I can live on the street. No, no it's fine. I've  
got good sense. I'll land on my feet, somehow.

NICOLE

You don't take anything seriously. I can't watch you become your  
father.

RUSSELL

I thought we weren't supposed to talk about him?

NICOLE

We don't talk about anything! What is it about your life that is  
so unmanageable that you have chosen to give up and slowly rot  
like some kind of-

*Beat*

RUSSELL

Turnip?

NICOLE

This is funny to you, isn't it?

RUSSELL

Hysterical.

*Pause*

NICOLE

I want you out. I mean it.

RUSSELL

Fine. I'll be gone by tomorrow.

NICOLE

I'm not kidding, Russell.

RUSSELL

I'm not laughing.

NICOLE

You have a month. I suggest you start looking for a job.

RUSSELL

I told you I'll be out by tomorrow.

NICOLE

Fine! Then I suggest you start packing.

*Nicole exits*

RUSSELL

A little more Christ? I have plenty of Christ.

*Jesus enters*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

See?

JESUS

How are you, my son?

RUSSELL

I'm great. I'm having a little issue with pseudo-hallucinatory psychosis, but hey, no one's perfect.

JESUS

I could tell you stories.

RUSSELL

Seriously, how did you stand it, all those people wanting something from you?

JESUS

I suppose I should say something profound. I loved all the people, or I knew that their weaknesses were only human and they needed my guidance. But the truth is I really don't like people all that much.

RUSSELL

Can't say I blame you.

JESUS

They have a terrible penchant for cruelty, and I'm not a big fan of organized religion. I look at the church in the same way most people look at water bugs...big, irritating, and totally without purpose.

RUSSELL

What's the answer to life, Jesus?

JESUS

You think if I had the answer to life I would have let them nail me to that wood?

RUSSELL

Weren't you relieved to die?

JESUS

I did have to pee. That was a long time up there. And I didn't want to be rude and piss all over the crowd. They were mourning, you know.

RUSSELL

I think it'll be a relief.

JESUS

Destruction can be liberating. Look at the Romans. Of course, they failed to see how that level of destruction can only invariably destroy oneself. I love paradox, it's so unscientific. Destruction is ultimate. Once you've destroyed your life you cannot refund your own existence.

RUSSELL

What if I have a receipt?

JESUS

Nice.

RUSSELL

That was pretty good, right?

JESUS

Too bad you've already broken the seal.

RUSSELL

Why did I choose to manifest you? I don't even believe in you. Maybe all of life is a dream? Why can't I wake up?

JESUS

Those who do not question the validity of their dreams, are the ones who can change the world.

RUSSELL

I think I read that on a bumper sticker once.

JESUS

Just keepin' it real.

RUSSELL

You want to talk about reality with a sleep deprived atheist who is currently contemplating a spiritual debate with a figment of his imagination?

JESUS

Imagination is reality. The true test of the empowered mind is not he who can succumb to reason, but rather, he who can defy it.

RUSSELL

Then I am riddled with reality! And I think I've got my religions confused.

JESUS

How long are you going to sit here and contemplate?

RUSSELL

Until I get tired.

JESUS

Aren't you tired of being a pussy?

RUSSELL

Excuse me?

JESUS

You don't fear what will come. The afterlife is nothing, right?

RUSSELL

What if I'm wrong?

JESUS

The gates will open. There will be a reckoning. You have to end this. It's time to nut up! The salvation is the best part! If you're wrong, you get to reinvent, but first you must repent.

RUSSELL

I'm scared. And what about what science tells us—

JESUS

Fuck science! There is no science in dreaming! In the deepest, darkest desires of the human soul there lies something beyond the explainable. Something that defines you, and all you are.

RUSSELL

I don't believe in the soul.

JESUS

You have seen the end. In the passing hours of day and night you are the idle time, the soft print. Time moves in all directions. It is not the raving, but the craven who stand dead set against the spiraling anarchy of it. Who turn their heads and shake their fists at those who progress, evolve, amend. You are the rock that drops in the middle of the stream. You change the current, the flow that rises and falls, swells and diminishes, like the beating of a new heart. And like that vital organ born of misery and joy, that one tiny muscle that makes all of life possible, you go on. The only way to sustain is through a bloody, violent mess. And the truth, the cruelest truth is that you are only one of billions and billions of pebbles.

RUSSELL

I don't want to go on.

JESUS

Repent. Then you will have something to look forward to. In the darkness. The end of the road.

*Jesus exits*

RUSSELL

I can't. (Beat) Repent? What a cunt! Repent for what?

*Russell lies down  
Melissa and Tony enter the living room*

MELISSA

You can't be serious.

TONY

You asked me a question, I gave you an answer.

MELISSA

Suicide is not a cry for attention. How can someone who's dead get attention?

TONY

Why are we talking about this?

MELISSA

I told you I was thinking about Russell.

TONY

Who?

MELISSA

Russell, my friend Elaine's nephew. You were at his funeral.

TONY

Why were you thinking about him?

MELISSA

Do you ever listen to me when I talk?

TONY

Is this a trap?

MELISSA

Yes! I'm trying to trap you by asking you if you care enough about me to perceive the words that are coming out of my mouth.

TONY

I don't want to fight.

MELISSA

Of course not, that would imply you care.

TONY

Melissa! Why are you so upset?

MELISSA

Because you're an asshole!

TONY

How is that an argument?

MELISSA

What?

TONY

You can't just call me names and let that be your entire argument for being upset. Oh, why are you so angry? Because you're from Ohio! See, it doesn't make any sense.

MELISSA

Let's just drop it.

*Pause*

TONY

Why were you thinking of Russell?

MELISSA

I saw a bum today.

TONY

Oh sure, that makes sense.

MELISSA

Can I finish? He was holding a sign that said "Einstein is Alive."

TONY

I still don't get it.

MELISSA

I'm trying to tell you!

TONY

You're going to make a connection with that?

MELISSA

If you'll let me talk.

TONY

Okay, I'm intrigued.

MELISSA

I've been having strange...experiences.

TONY

What does that mean?

MELISSA

I think I may be in contact with the dead.

TONY

Uh-huh. Did you take something at the party tonight?

MELISSA

Forget it!

TONY

Are you being serious?

MELISSA

I don't know why I'd tell you anything, anyway.

TONY

Melissa, are you telling me that you're hearing voices?

MELISSA

I know it sounds crazy-

TONY

What do you mean in contact with the dead?

MELISSA

I think Russell is trying to contact me.

TONY

Why do you think that?

MELISSA

Just hear me out.

TONY

I'm listening.

MELISSA

Tonight at the party I was talking to your boss and I told him about the bum that I saw, and then I proceeded to recite the theory of relativity.

TONY

Recite? You recited the theory of relativity? You what, you memorized it?

MELISSA

No. I don't even know it. That's what makes it so incredible. It was like this other voice, like there was someone or something making me say it.

TONY

Making you?

MELISSA

I think I was channeled.

TONY

Channeled?

MELISSA

Stop asking questions I've already answered!

TONY

I have no precedence for this, I'm sorry. Why would this be happening? It doesn't make any sense.

MELISSA

I'm not crazy.

TONY

I didn't say-

MELISSA

You think I'm crazy.

TONY

That's not what I was thinking.

*Nicole enters the kitchen*

MELISSA

Because it sounds crazy.

TONY

Well-

MELISSA

Let's just drop it. Forget I said anything, I don't want to talk to you!

Melissa exits

TONY

Melissa, wait!

*Tony exits the living room.  
Edna (60's) enters the kitchen*

EDNA

Humble yourself in the sight of the lord, and he shall lift you up.

NICOLE

Mom, I need a minute.

EDNA

What you need is to surrender.

NICOLE

Will that shut you up? Okay, I surrender. Take me away, I'm guilty!

EDNA

What are you shouting about?

NICOLE

It's my son's funeral!

EDNA

Yeah I know, he was my grandson.

NICOLE

Oh that's right, I'm sorry I forgot this must be about you.

EDNA

Oh hush. You're just like your father; you always take everything out on everyone around you. You blame the world for your troubles.

NICOLE

Please, leave me alone.

EDNA

Don't imply that I'm not welcome in your house.

NICOLE

I wasn't.

EDNA

Suicide is cruel. You must rise above this.

RUSSELL

Grandma's fun, isn't she? Not one of your cookie baking sweet old Nana's that tells stories about the great war. No, my grandma used to tell me bedtime stories about the rapture, and the high cost of sin. And she didn't bake, she poached. Everything.

NICOLE

I told him to leave. I told him I wanted him out. Why did I say that?

EDNA

He was selfish.

NICOLE

I told him to leave!

EDNA

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins".

RUSSELL

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment".

EDNA

John 8:24.

RUSSELL

John 16:8.

EDNA

Stop being maudlin.

NICOLE

Maybe I could've done something.

EDNA

Well, you do have a history-

NICOLE

What?

EDNA

Well, let's look at the facts; a husband and son dead by their own hands, to use a crude sports metaphor you're batting 0 for two.

NICOLE

Are you blaming me?

EDNA

Don't shout.

NICOLE

I don't believe this.

*A Knock on Russell's door*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

Is that you death? It's open! My soul is fresh and ready to be extracted.

*Elaine enters Russell's room*

ELAINE

Hey.

RUSSELL

Oh. You are not the gentleman I was expecting.

ELAINE

Sorry. Are you expecting someone?

RUSSELL

No, and I thank you for not getting my reference. Makes me feel smart.

NICOLE

I don't think I can take this.

EDNA

We can find strength in the lord.

ELAINE

How are you doing?

RUSSELL

Fine. You?

NICOLE

No. This isn't something that you can fill with biblical extractions and bullshit dogma!

EDNA

Don't talk like that. You are better than this.

ELAINE

Me? Oh, I'm good.

RUSSELL

Great.

NICOLE

My only son is dead! He's dead. Okay, this isn't something that a hymn, or an inspirational saying, or a fucking revered proverb is going to make somehow all better. This is end of the road pain! You get that? This is that suffocating, crushing blow that you don't recover from. This is a huge fucking rock landing on your face! Is there any way that you could possibly get that?

EDNA

I won't be spoken to this way.

*Edna exits*

RUSSELL

So, this is awkward. You want to talk about the weather?

ELAINE

I think we should talk, Russell. Your mom told me that you're moving out.

RUSSELL

Yep. Moving on...moving up...finally gonna get a piece of the pie.

ELAINE

You know if you need somewhere to stay—

RUSSELL

No thanks.

NICOLE

Shit! I'll never hear the end of this! Mom!

*Nicole exits the kitchen*

ELAINE

I know what it feels like to feel trapped somewhere, but she says you're not even leaving this room.

RUSSELL

I don't like the view from the rest of the house.

ELAINE

There are no windows in here, Russ.

RUSSELL

Windows? I don't mean the liminal view of a squared piece of glass from which one gazes upon the activities of others. I'm no voyeur for god's sake! I mean the window to immortality. A looking glass, if you will.

ELAINE

Tell me what I can do. How can I help you?

RUSSELL

Do you know anything about quantum physics? I'm trying to create a separate dimension that only I can survive in.

ELAINE

Have you thought about going back to school?

RUSSELL

Yeah, and then I thought about sticking sewing needles into my corneas. So much for bad ideas, huh?

ELAINE

I think we really just need to talk.

RUSSELL

What am I grunting? Is this not talking?

ELAINE

I'm worried about you.

RUSSELL

Why?

ELAINE

There's something...wrong. Something is going on. Why won't you tell me?

RUSSELL

Well, there is unrest in the Middle East. So, you know, that's going on.

ELAINE

Okay what do you want to talk about?

RUSSELL

Do you know anything about the Large Hadron Collider?

ELAINE

We're talking about you, Russell. Tell me something about you.

RUSSELL

I'm a Capricorn.

ELAINE

You really don't trust me?

RUSSELL

Why are you down here?

ELAINE

You have to talk to someone. Don't you trust me?

RUSSELL

I don't even like you.

ELAINE

Russell!

RUSSELL

My mother sent you down here. You really think I'm stupid? You don't do anything that my mother doesn't tell you to do. And then, you do it with a smile. Like one of the flying monkeys doing that green bitch's bidding, you swoop down and rain my mother's monkey shit on my face. Okay, I may be tired, that metaphor didn't fully work. But, I think my point is clear.

ELAINE

Why are you so mad at me?

RUSSELL

Because you're pathetic!

*Tony and Melissa enter the living room*

TONY

I don't understand why you won't explain this to me!

MELISSA

Maybe because you're too stupid to understand it!

TONY

Melissa, you just told me that you're hearing voices.

MELISSA

You never listen to me! I didn't say voices. I know this sounds crazy.

TONY

Do you?

MELISSA

See, there you go?

ELAINE

Russell, you can't just lash out at people when they're trying to help you.

RUSSELL

Who the fuck said I needed your help?

TONY

What did I say?

MELISSA

I didn't say I was hearing voices. I said I was channeled!

ELAINE

Russell, you do need help.

TONY

But that sounds insane!

RUSSELL

Do you know what today is?

MELISSA

Do you know what day it is?

TONY  
Yeah, it's the 14<sup>th</sup>.

RUSSELL  
It's March 14<sup>th</sup>.

ELAINE  
So?

TONY  
So?

RUSSELL  
The day of reckoning.

TONY  
What does it matter what day it is?

MELISSA  
March 14<sup>th</sup>? The day Russell died.

TONY  
Okay.

MELISSA  
March 14<sup>th</sup> is Einstein's birthday.

RUSSELL  
It's Einstein's birthday.

ELAINE  
Okay. Why are you telling me this?

MELISSA  
Don't you get it?

TONY  
No. I really don't think there's anything to get, except maybe some medication to calm you down.

MELISSA  
You don't see the connection?

ELAINE  
What about it, Russell?

TONY

No. There's no connection! You're creating the connection!

RUSSELL

Einstein once said that we are all living our past, present, and future simultaneously.

ELAINE

Yeah?

MELISSA

It's not just a coincidence. Something is happening. I don't think Russell is at peace. I think he needs my help.

TONY

So he told you the theory of relativity from beyond the grave? That's a rational jump to make! Maybe you should open one of the store front psychic shops and we can retire on your mental illness!

RUSSELL

Distance and time are not absolute.

MELISSA

Distance and time are not absolute.

TONY

What?

RUSSELL

*(Overlapping)*

The ticking rate of a clock depends on the motion of the observer of that clock.

MELISSA

*(Overlapping)*

The ticking rate of a clock depends on the motion of the observer of that clock.

TONY

What is this, what's going on?

RUSSELL

Yeah, it's not going to work on this asshole.

MELISSA

Your asshole doesn't work!

TONY

Excuse me?

ELAINE

What are you talking about? I don't understand.

RUSSELL

I'm a time-bender! I can predict the fucking future!

MELISSA

Something is happening to me!

TONY

Yeah, I can see that.

ELAINE

You have to stop this. Russell, you can't do this anymore. You can come and stay with me for a little while. It'll do you good.

MELISSA

That bum! The one with the sign. I think he's a messenger.

TONY

For who?

RUSSELL

Whom!

MELISSA

I have to find him.

TONY

Melissa, what are you doing? You can't go wandering the streets looking for a bum.

ELAINE

We used to be so close, Russell. When did that change?

MELISSA

Stay out of this Tony! You obviously don't care about my spiritual awakening.

TONY

This isn't a spiritual awakening, it's some kind of psychotic break! We can get you good help.

MELISSA

I know it sounds crazy, okay! I get it! But it's too many coincidences, I can't ignore it. Something is happening to me, and I have to find out what it is. Just stay away from me!

*Melissa exits.*

TONY (Cont'd)

Melissa!

*Tony exits.*

ELAINE

Are you going to ignore me now?

RUSSELL

This isn't now. This is maybe later. This isn't real. This is used to be. I'll be leaving soon.

ELAINE

Leaving? Where to?

RUSSELL

Into obscurity. Like Pol Pot, I'll just retreat internally.

ELAINE

I don't know what that means.

RUSSELL

Into the depths of Cambodia.

ELAINE

You want to go to Cambodia?

RUSSELL

No, nevermind.

ELAINE

You have nowhere to go. Why don't you just come stay with me? It'll be fun.

RUSSELL

Yeah, you're a hoot. Are you deaf? I'm already gone! I mean...I've already figured out the destination. It's the road that I haven't decided on.

ELAINE

But, these are just silly words, Russell. You don't do anything!  
Where are you really headed?

RUSSELL

It's a secret.

ELAINE

Because you're not going anywhere.

RUSSELL

Aren't I?

ELAINE

Where then?

RUSSELL

I can't tell.

ELAINE

Because there's nowhere.

RUSSELL

Nowhere is a place I've already been. Long waiting periods in  
nowhere. I've grown tired of waiting; I wanna get on the ride.

ELAINE

You still make jokes to cover your feelings, just like when you  
were a kid.

RUSSELL

And you still condescend when you feel intellectually inferior.

ELAINE

Russell?

RUSSELL

What?

ELAINE

Something bad is going to happen!

RUSSELL

Really? Something bad already happened! You have to leave, I'm  
gonna be late.

ELAINE

Late for what? Where are you going?

RUSSELL

Gehenna! I'm going to Abaddon. The long, slow decent into pandemonium. I'm heading south.

ELAINE

I have a guest room—

RUSSELL

You're not even listening to me, are you?

ELAINE

It's above ground.

RUSSELL

Now I'm not listening to you.

ELAINE

You wouldn't have to pay me anything. You can take some time to figure out what you want to do.

RUSSELL

Blah, blah, blah! Blah...

ELAINE

This can't be what you want to do!

RUSSELL

Blah.

*Pause*

ELAINE

I really hate seeing you like this.

RUSSELL

So close your eyes.

ELAINE

I just want to help you. Why don't you want my help?

RUSSELL

Because you sicken me! You and my mother are twisted! Physician heal thy fucking self!

ELAINE

Russell-

RUSSELL

Now I'm annoyed! Get the fuck out of my room! Tell mommy dearest you couldn't get through. Or better yet, tell her I broke down and wept in your arms like a little girl. That'll win you some bonus points.

ELAINE

I just thought-

RUSSELL

I repeat, I'm annoyed! Get out!

ELAINE

I'm not the enemy, here, Russell.

RUSSELL

But you are her proxy. So, the two of you can take your best intentions and stick them up your assholes!

ELAINE

Your mother isn't the enemy either. Aren't you a little old to be blaming your mother for everything?

RUSSELL

Please, for the love of God, Fuck the fuck off!

ELAINE

You're going to regret treating people like this someday.

RUSSELL

Get out!

ELAINE

Yeah, I'm going.

*Elaine exits.*

RUSSELL

Einstein's birthday? What a fucking irony.

*Einstein enters the bedroom*

EINSTEIN

You don't believe in irony.

RUSSELL

Happy Birthday. I didn't actually plan to kill myself on your birthday, you know.

EINSTEIN

But we both know that's not true, don't we?

RUSSELL

Wow, your hair really is that fucked up.

EINSTEIN

You chose my birthday for a very specific reason.

RUSSELL

I don't want to talk about him.

EINSTEIN

You contemplate the future.

RUSSELL

I do. I also contemplate manifest delusions. I have issues.

EINSTEIN

But you are not in the future that you imagine.

RUSSELL

Neither are you. We're the same; specters. Ghosts of some magical, Dickensian past come to prepare future scientists, poets, atheists. The pragmatists are going to be the hardest ones to get through to. They have no imagination.

EINSTEIN

Why are you hanging on? What life is there for you in this awful circle that you go round and round in?

RUSSELL

You were the one that said that all of time is an illusion. Aren't we all going around and around? Aren't you alive somewhere, blowing people's minds with your theories?

EINSTEIN

You find solace in your humor.

RUSSELL

It's all relative.

EINSTEIN

You make yourself laugh.

RUSSELL

Yeah, I kill myself.

EINSTEIN

So why am I here?

RUSSELL

You? You are a delusional representation of my inability to comprehend the world without me in it. Turns out it is all about me.

EINSTEIN

Ah yes, the imperfect human belief that we are the center of the universe.

RUSSELL

I've already said that. Your originality supersedes your existence.

EINSTEIN

Does the idea of me comfort you?

RUSSELL

Not really. Maybe this is my breaking point. Maybe I can't come back from this.

EINSTEIN

Our breaking point only comes once. If we ignore it, we lose the ability to change.

*Pause*

RUSSELL

What happens when I die?

EINSTEIN

That's not really my field, you know.

RUSSELL

Well, I asked Jesus but he wasn't very forthcoming. He told me to repent. What else is he going to say? I'm not a fan.

EINSTEIN

The world is constructed in such a way as to make the very shape of it impossible to understand. When I say something to you over

here it may echo in the darkened corner over there. Therefore, you must believe that if you live or die, you do not end.

RUSSELL

I don't know what that means.

EINSTEIN

You believe it will end. You want everything to be wrapped up in a nice little package, and left in the ground to rot. But time is not tangible. You cannot erase this.

RUSSELL

There's no other way. Believe me, I've looked.

EINSTEIN

You have looked, but you have not seen.

RUSSELL

What am I supposed to see? I don't believe in the afterlife. Hasn't science shown us that spirituality is a preposterous pursuit?

EINSTEIN

You think science is the answer? My dear boy, science is the question.

RUSSELL

What happens after?

EINSTEIN

You just said there is no after? What if there is only this? Time stands broken, and like splintered pieces of glass, reflects crooked life, misshapen...exquisitely fractured. The world will go on without you. But, you get to remain a small sliver in that beautiful tapestry, a mark, a scratch, a small blemish that says I was here. No matter how long or short your life, you cannot remove that. It's there. So go. What are you waiting for? Do it.

RUSSELL

I can't.

EINSTEIN

You must! Everything ends! And nothing ends. Everything that has started will start again. Why are you so afraid? It is the next moment, and the one after, not the ones behind that will change. If you want to change the next one, you cannot change this one.

RUSSELL

I don't get that.

EINSTEIN

Time is frail. The past demands cooperation from the future.

RUSSELL

But what about now?

EINSTEIN

The now is a reaction to them. Both sides of now rest upon the reality of an elusive when. You have to die tonight, Russell, or the very fabric of then and now will change forever the future that you desperately seek to avoid. You've already died for them. They can't exist if you live. This isn't the present. You are trapped with them. Don't you see? You have control. Or you're just having a psychotic hallucination. In which case, I would seek medical attention before you take my advice.

RUSSELL

I want to know what happens.

*Tony enters the kitchen and lights a cigarette*

EINSTEIN

You already do. The future has passed.

*Einstein exits.*

RUSSELL

How? Wait, what? You can't just say something like that and disappear. Miserable dead Kraut!

*Nicole enters the kitchen*

NICOLE

Put that out, you incredibly rude ignoramus!

TONY

I'm sorry. I thought everyone was outside.

NICOLE

Why didn't you smoke out there?

TONY

My wife doesn't know I smoke.

NICOLE

Does she know you're an idiot?

TONY

Sorry about the cigarette.

NICOLE

Seriously, who smokes in someone's kitchen?

TONY

I'm sorry.

*Pause*

NICOLE

What?

TONY

I'm sorry about your son.

NICOLE

So am I.

TONY

I'm Tony by the way; I don't think we've actually met. My wife is your sister's friend.

NICOLE

Yeah, I know. Sorry I snapped at you. I've been finding it more and more difficult to be Christ-like given the circumstances.

TONY

That's understandable.

NICOLE

Is it?

TONY

Of course.

NICOLE

Do you believe in God, Tony?

TONY

Sure, I guess.

NICOLE

That's disappointing. Sure, I guess? That's a terrible answer.

TONY

I don't like to put a name to it. I believe in a higher power.

NICOLE

Are you an alcoholic?

TONY

No.

NICOLE

Sounds like twelve step bullshit to me. Higher power? What does that even mean?

TONY

It means—

NICOLE

I used to believe that if we lived our lives in a certain way, we would be rewarded for our goodness and charity. What a joke.

TONY

I think that's true.

NICOLE

What are we really doing, though? Seeking to prolong damnation by way of limiting sin to the really unavoidable ones like coveting, and envy? And then, we suffer at the very idea of not purging ourselves to the fullest extent of the lord. And for what?

TONY

I don't really think that—

NICOLE

For the promise that the high road will lead to an eternity of peaceful serenity in His-capital h-presence. Unfortunately, the high road is paved with bitter disappointment and despair.

TONY

I can imagine that it feels that way.

NICOLE

I've lived as good as I can. I have given my life to His will. And in the end, He has chosen to not only turn from me, but to take a rather long and brutal shit on me!

TONY

Wow. Okay.

NICOLE

I rely on so few things in this world, my family, double coupon day, and that God will be a perpetual source of light and joy in my heart and daily life.

TONY

Well—

NICOLE

And now, I'm left with a dead son, something like forty pounds of undercooked lamb shanks, my mother, and thousands and thousands of dollars in funeral bills that will undoubtedly cause my filing for bankruptcy. And I'm supposed to turn to the bible for comfort? Where is the passage that tells you how to handle this? Where does it say it's okay that your life is complete shit? The bible! It's a source of refuge and strength from the horrifying world that is closing in around me, and turning what was once bright and dignified into shit-covered mothballs rotting in the cellar where my dead son's body was removed not more than one week ago! Where is God now? What kind of reason could the son-of-a-bitch have for this?

TONY

Maybe it's not because of God.

NICOLE

That's right. No, you're right. There is no reason. God doesn't do anything. He abandoned me. That mother fucker.

*Elaine enters the kitchen*

ELAINE

What's going on in here?

NICOLE

This is the sound of mourning, okay!

ELAINE

Why are you yelling?

NICOLE

I'm not yelling! I'm going outside!

*Nicole exits*

ELAINE

What happened?

TONY

She's just upset.

ELAINE

She was screaming.

*Melissa enters the kitchen*

MELISSA

There you are, Tony. I thought you left.

ELAINE

Why would I leave?

MELISSA

Were you smoking?

TONY

I don't smoke.

MELISSA

I smell smoke.

TONY

You don't smell smoke.

MELISSA

Don't tell me I don't smell smoke. I don't just go around imagining that I smell smoke. Someone smoked in here.

TONY

Maybe there was a fire.

MELISSA

Or maybe someone smoked.

TONY

Could we not do this?

MELISSA

Do what?

TONY

Nothing. I'm going to go check on your sister.

ELAINE

Oh, thanks.

*Tony exits.*

MELISSA

He's smoking again. After we both quit for five years. Moron. How are you holding up?

ELAINE

I'm fine. Do you ever get the feeling that things are happening all around you, all the time, but none of it is happening to you?

MELISSA

What do you mean?

ELAINE

I don't know. It feels like everyone keeps making decisions that change everything, and I don't get a say in any of it.

MELISSA

What do you want to say?

ELAINE

I'm tired. I'm just babbling. I'm sorry, it's been a terrible week.

MELISSA

Yeah, I can't even imagine.

*A knock on Russell's door*

RUSSELL

Once more with feeling! It's open!

*Silence*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

Hello?

ELAINE

I should get back out there. People are probably worried about all the yelling.

MELISSA

Are you kidding, they're too busy stuffing their faces. Who brought all that lamb?

*Elaine and Melissa exit.*

*Russell opens his door. There's no one there.*

RUSSELL

I'm hearing things now?

*Russell exits out the door  
Edna and Nicole enter the kitchen.*

NICOLE

Stop following me!

EDNA

You cannot question the Lord's will.

NICOLE

I will question anyone I want to in this house!

EDNA

What good can you profit from losing sight of His plan?

NICOLE

What good? What good! Why don't you take a long hard look around this house, mother! What exactly have I profited so far?

EDNA

He has a plan. You cannot turn your back on Him—

NICOLE

God is not an insurance agent. He has no plan!

*Elaine enters the kitchen.*

ELAINE

What is going on, now?

EDNA

This is none of your concern.

ELAINE

The entire house can hear the two of you.

NICOLE

Oh who gives a shit, Elaine!

EDNA

That's right, go ahead make a scene. After all, you were the only one who had to bury a loved one today.

NICOLE

He was my son!

ELAINE

Nicole, stop yelling!

NICOLE

There you go. There it is.

ELAINE

There what is?

NICOLE

It's my son's funeral, and all you can do is gang up on me to protect your poor mother.

ELAINE

That's not what I was doing. You are making a scene at your son's funeral!

EDNA

Stop!

NICOLE

Yeah, that's right he was my son! The two of you try to take everything away from me. Well guess what? You can't have this! My son is dead. Mine! Not yours!

EDNA

I didn't realize it was a competition.

NICOLE

You always try to suppress me and shut me up, because I'm the only one in this house who tells the truth!

EDNA

Stop this right now.

NICOLE

You put everything off on me. And then you blame me when things fall apart! It's not my fault that he died!

ELAINE

Who has ever said that?

NICOLE

Oh Shut up, Elaine! You're only here as an advocate of hers. I don't care what you think.

ELAINE

Really? You don't think I've been aware of that fact since I was five years old?

EDNA

Shut up, Elaine. This isn't about you.

NICOLE

That's right, it's about me! And that drives both of you crazy, doesn't it?

EDNA

We're not trying to take your son's death away from you. By all means have it, and this ridiculous mental breakdown.

NICOLE

Oh sure, now I'm crazy!

EDNA

You don't think you're behavior is crazy?

NICOLE

Yours would be too if you had to put up with the shit I'm putting up with.

EDNA

What do you want from me?

NICOLE

Just get away from me. That's what I want. I want to be left alone for five fucking minutes.

*Nicole exits.*

EDNA

I will not stay away from you.

*Edna exits.*

*Russell enters the kitchen*

RUSSELL

Well, well, well, the cheese stands alone.

ELAINE

What are you doing here?

RUSSELL

Haven't you heard? You're living in an illusion.

ELAINE

Great, now I'm hallucinating. No sleep, fifty cups of bad coffee, and what's most likely tainted lamb meat, and I'm a crazy person.

RUSSELL

Are you sad?

ELAINE

You're dead.

RUSSELL

Only where you are. I'm alive over there.

ELAINE

So, you're what, a ghost?

RUSSELL

I just said I'm alive. Why doesn't anyone listen to me? I'm in my room right now, thinking about how it'll feel when I, you know, leave my body, or whatever.

ELAINE

And you wandered here to determine how sad you've made me?

RUSSELL

I always did require a warped sense of assurance.

ELAINE

Are you assured?

RUSSELL

How would I know, I'm dead.

ELAINE

Don't make jokes, Russell.

RUSSELL

It's how I survive.

ELAINE

That's not funny.

RUSSELL

It's a mechanism.

ELAINE

It's malevolent.

RUSSELL

I'm not well, I get to be insensitive.

ELAINE

I shouldn't be imagining you. It's not going to help anything.

RUSSELL

How do you know I'm not imagining you?

ELAINE

Why did you do it?

RUSSELL

It doesn't matter what I say if you're not really here. Of course, you might be here, and I might be the illusion. It's very complicated.

*Melissa enters the kitchen.*

MELISSA

I've been to every corner in the entire neighborhood. I don't think I'll ever find him.

RUSSELL

Now we're getting into weird territory.

ELAINE

Melissa? What are you doing?

MELISSA

Elaine? Where did I wander to?

ELAINE

What do you mean?

MELISSA

What do you mean?

RUSSELL

She thinks she's really here. Of course she might be, or you might be, or I might be. We all might be. I don't know how that last one could be a thing. Two of us are clearly not here.

MELISSA

Strange things have been happening. I went looking for some bum with a sign. I think he's moved on.

RUSSELL

Bummer.

MELISSA

What about you?

RUSSELL

I like to wallow in self pity.

MELISSA

Well, it's your funeral.

RUSSELL

Solid.

ELAINE

Wait a minute. Will someone please explain to me what's going on?

RUSSELL

It must be some disturbance in the continuum.

ELAINE

Thank you Obi-Wan Kenobi! Can I get a straight answer?

MELISSA

I guess it makes sense. This funeral ruined my life.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry, it wasn't my best day either.

ELAINE

How did the funeral ruin your life?

MELISSA

Tony met his mistress here.

ELAINE

At Russell's funeral?

RUSSELL

It's so macabre.

ELAINE

It's so disrespectful.

MELISSA

It's so Tony. They've been fucking for five years.

RUSSELL

I've been dead for five years where you come from?

MELISSA

I thought I could change for him. You know?

RUSSELL

Do you often resort to clichés when reminiscing?

MELISSA

Most of the time I don't acknowledge it.

RUSSELL

Ah yes, denial; the hallmark of American tradition.

ELAINE

I didn't know Tony was cheating on you.

MELISSA

Shouldn't he be? I mean from his point of view I'm probably the cold, withdrawn wife.

RUSSELL

I like that my funeral is the center of our collective moral universe. Makes me feel good.

MELISSA  
This isn't real.

ELAINE  
How is it my center?

RUSSELL  
How would I know?

ELAINE  
I'm having some kind of delusion, or...I don't know, what's the word?

MELISSA  
Recognition.

RUSSELL  
Desperation.

MELISSA  
Longing.

RUSSELL  
Morbid curiosity.

MELISSA  
It's like revisiting the scene of the crime.

RUSSELL  
Retribution for past sins.

MELISSA  
And future ones.

ELAINE  
I don't understand. What sins?

MELISSA  
How should we know? This is your reality.

ELAINE  
I thought he just said it wasn't.

RUSSELL  
It must be someone's.

MELISSA

It's not mine. No, I would never decorate a room in this color.

ELAINE

Well, if it's mine, what do I do now?

RUSSELL

You have to decide.

ELAINE

Decide what?

RUSSELL

One of us has to make a decision. Or—

MELISSA

We wait—

RUSSELL

For someone else to make it for us.

*Pause*

*A knock on Russell's door*

ELAINE

I don't like this.

MELISSA

One of us has to break the cycle.

ELAINE

What cycle?

RUSSELL

I killed myself.

ELAINE

I know.

MELISSA

My husband's having an affair.

ELAINE

And?

RUSSELL

This is where it gets really interesting.

MELISSA

With your sister.

ELAINE

With my...? With Nicole? That's ridiculous.

MELISSA

Oh, like you didn't know.

ELAINE

I didn't know. How would I have known?

RUSSELL

Classy, right? She was cruising for dick at my funeral.

MELISSA

They hit it off right away.

RUSSELL

He followed her outside when she got upset, and she found his companionship soothing and familiar.

MELISSA

Like they'd known each other for years.

ELAINE

Wait a second. If this isn't even real, why should I believe this?

RUSSELL

You don't have to believe it.

ELAINE

I don't care. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters. Oh my God, look at my life. Look at what I do. I'm background. I'm the one who shows up for funerals, and holidays. I'm the one who always says the right thing. I mean Christ, even in my own delusion I give the two of you better subplots!

MELISSA

You are a good listener.

RUSSELL

When you get put on hold because the important people are on the other line, you always wait until the caller comes back.

ELAINE

Really? Is that the best I got? This is crazy! You're not even here. This isn't happening.

*A knock at Russell's door*

MELISSA

Expecting someone?

RUSSELL

I might be.

ELAINE

I want you both to go away now.

MELISSA

He's the dead one. I shouldn't have to go away.

ELAINE

I need to sleep, probably have to have my stomach pumped from all the bad meat.

MELISSA

Elaine! What are you so afraid of facing?

ELAINE

Nothing. Everything. What do you mean? Why do you assume that I'm the one not facing something? I mean, you have a cheating husband, and you're dead. I'm the one with some semblance of sanity at this table.

RUSSELL

Don't you want this to stop? Don't you want answers? How many times are we going to do this?

ELAINE

What do you mean? We've done this before?

RUSSELL

Haven't we?

ELAINE

Maybe I'm crazy?

RUSSELL

Maybe it's your fault.

What's my fault?

ELAINE

Why did I kill myself?

RUSSELL

I don't know.

ELAINE

Because of you.

RUSSELL

Yikes! That's a bit harsh.

MELISSA

Because of me?

ELAINE

She's probably not ready to hear that.

MELISSA

What did I do?

ELAINE

Once you step into this...you can't step back out. We're all connected. We all want the same thing.

RUSSELL

We have to keep going. We have to keep looking for the answers.

MELISSA

*Melissa exits*

What do you want?

RUSSELL

You can't tell me you died because of me.

ELAINE

*A knock on Russell's door*

RUSSELL  
I pictured myself as I was, a future me. I was waiting there for myself to catch up, to find the me that I had become. What if we're all waiting somewhere for the past us to become the future us? And then I said I couldn't go. I wanted to but I couldn't. Today, today young searching one, the time will not abate...

*Russell slowly crosses to his bedroom door*

ELAINE

Russell, please!

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

Away, away young searching one, take wing unto your fate. And sing the song you've always sung...

*Beat*

ELAINE

Russell...

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

...Before it's much too late. *(Pause)* Ready or not...

*Blackout*

***End of Act One***

**Act Two**

*Russell sits on his bed. Nicole is drinking tea at her kitchen table in a bathrobe. Tony sits on his couch.*

RUSSELL

Okay so it wasn't death. It was mom. Poor mom. She wanted to bring me down a suitcase to pack my clothes in. She's so thoughtful that way. Time does move very strangely here. I've been listening to these two for what feels like eternity.

TONY

I always thought she'd leave me because of the affair.

NICOLE

I'm considering having an affair with the husband of my sister's friend.

TONY

I didn't think it would last this long.

NICOLE

I don't know if I can, but I'm considering it.

RUSSELL

One of the burdens of enlightenment is the power of perception. It's like I've tapped into some terrible radio waves, and now I'm stuck on a country western station. I should point out that I'm not a fan. I can't stand all that melancholy. Ah yes, lament your weebegone stories, children of the confederate past. She left me for another man. He won't leave his wife. I found out he's my cousin! And then there's mom. That proselytizing, son chastising, soon-to-be virtue compromising, right-on mom!

NICOLE

But I don't know if I can.

RUSSELL

And then there's Jethro over there, the poor mountaineer with no wife in his bed.

TONY

I have to end it.

NICOLE

He probably won't want to pursue it. I'm not very desirable.

TONY

She's not even good at it.

RUSSELL

I like the deceptive simplicity of prescience.

NICOLE

I like that he makes me feel like I'm part of the world again.

TONY

I like the disconnect to the real world she offers me.

NICOLE

But it's wrong.

TONY

I have to end it.

RUSSELL

I've got to pack up my truck and hit the high road!

NICOLE

I don't even know if I like him as a person. What's happening to me?

TONY

Maybe I need to just be on my own now.

RUSSELL

I do wonder how all of this will turn out, don't you?

*Edna enters the kitchen*

EDNA

You left your front door unlocked.

NICOLE

And look what happened as a result. Do you feel the need to enter every unlocked door you happen across?

EDNA

Don't be smart.

NICOLE

A motherly pearl of wisdom.

EDNA

I see you are still in your bathrobe.

NICOLE

I see you still have a keen sense of observation.

EDNA

Nicole we need to talk.

NICOLE

What do you want to talk about?

EDNA

This coffee is awful. When did you make it?

NICOLE

Tuesday. Is that the pressing issue at hand, or are you just pointing out my inadequacies in general?

EDNA

It's dreadful.

NICOLE

Can we move this along please? My schedule is a real bear. I have to take a nap soon.

EDNA

Where's your sister?

NICOLE

How should I know?

EDNA

Did you know she's seeing a therapist?

NICOLE

I didn't.

EDNA

Doesn't that bother you?

NICOLE

Mom, this isn't 1950. People see therapists; it doesn't mean they're having breakdowns. What are you bothering me with this for?

EDNA

I'm sorry if it's inconveniencing you that your sister is in the midst of a psychological breakdown. I guess I thought you might be concerned.

NICOLE

Please, stop. Why are you here?

EDNA

Can't a mother be concerned?

NICOLE

I'm fine! Happy?

EDNA

Not everything is about you, you know.

NICOLE

Said the kettle.

EDNA

I don't know what that means, but I can assume it was pejorative.

NICOLE

Where did you ever hear that word?

EDNA

I think it's time we talked about Russell.

*Beat*

NICOLE

I don't want to talk about him.

EDNA

I don't care. You feel responsible for his death, I know you do.

NICOLE

You're only saying that because you blamed me for it.

EDNA

Elaine feels responsible too.

NICOLE

What?

EDNA

I overheard her on the phone.

NICOLE

You were eavesdropping.

EDNA

She was talking to a man.

NICOLE

How would you know that?

EDNA

A mother can tell.

NICOLE

Is that relevant to this story?

EDNA

Why won't my children talk to me?

NICOLE

I don't want to talk about it.

EDNA

Nicole, we can't just ignore—

NICOLE

Mom, just stop talking!

*Elaine enters the living room*

ELAINE

Tony! What is going on? Who leaves a message like that! Oh, Please, come help me! What are you doing?

TONY

She left me. She finally left me.

ELAINE

She what? Oh Jesus. Finally? What do you mean? What did you do?

TONY

I didn't do anything. I mean not that she knows about.

ELAINE

I don't want to engage on that. Did she say why she was leaving?

TONY

I don't know. She wants to talk to some homeless guy. She saw a sign, or he told her something about the theory of relativity.

ELAINE

Have you slept?

TONY

Elaine, you're her friend. Did you know she wanted to leave me?

ELAINE

Of course not.

TONY

Have you talked to her?

ELAINE

Not for a couple weeks. How long has she been gone?

TONY

She's been gone for two weeks.

ELAINE

Why are you just calling me for help now?

TONY

I thought she'd come back by now. You know how she is? She gets these ideas in her head, and then she acts on them. And then she calms down, and eats a lot of ice cream, and then we're fine.

EDNA

Can I say something now?

NICOLE

I really wish you wouldn't.

TONY

I need your help.

ELAINE

Christ.

NICOLE

What?

EDNA

Why do you think Russell killed himself?

NICOLE

Are you kidding me?

EDNA

Nicole—

NICOLE

Seriously! Are you kidding me!

EDNA

You're his mother. You have to know.

NICOLE

I'm not doing this.

TONY

Elaine, I don't know what I'll do if she doesn't come back.

ELAINE

Tony, I don't know what you want me to say.

TONY

I've been cheating on her.

EDNA

I am only trying to figure out—

NICOLE

I don't care. I'm not listening!

*Nicole exits*

ELAINE

What?

TONY

I'm a shit.

EDNA

I should've adopted.

*Edna sits and reads a newspaper*

TONY

I've been cheating on her for awhile. Is that why she left me?

ELAINE

Why are you asking me?

TONY

Elaine, please.

ELAINE

Tony, I don't want to know about this. Melissa's my friend.

TONY

She must have known.

ELAINE

Why did you call me?

TONY

I didn't know who else would help me.

ELAINE

What can I do?

TONY

She said the guy had a sign that said something about Einstein being undead, or I don't remember.

RUSSELL & ELAINE

Einstein is alive.

TONY

Yeah, I think so. Did she tell you about him?

ELAINE

No.

TONY

How did you know that?

ELAINE

It's...I don't know. Something's familiar. Something...I was at the funeral.

TONY

What?

ELAINE

I was in Russell's room, and then I talked to him at the funeral. This isn't happening.

TONY

What's not happening?

ELAINE

Right now. This isn't real, is it?

RUSSELL

Isn't it?

TONY

You're starting to freak me out.

ELAINE

I have no control over this. I don't remember how I got here.

RUSSELL

It's reflection.

ELAINE

Projection.

RUSSELL & ELAINE

Illusion.

TONY

Elaine?

ELAINE

I'm not talking to you.

*Elaine crosses toward Russell*

RUSSELL

Once you step into the muddy waters of time, it's sink or swim.

ELAINE

The only difference between the past, present and future..

RUSSELL

Is a stubbornly persistent illusion.

*Elaine enters Russell's room*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

Hi.

ELAINE

Einstein is alive. What does that mean?

RUSSELL

How should I know?

ELAINE

Are you imagining this, or am I?

RUSSELL

We both are?

ELAINE

We can't both be.

RUSSELL

My delusion could hardly affect yours.

ELAINE

It's yours then?

RUSSELL

You assume.

ELAINE

Why aren't you dead?

RUSSELL

That sort of hurts my feelings.

ELAINE

You're supposed to be dead.

RUSSELL

You're supposed to be at my funeral. What are you doing here? Maybe you're so desperate to change the past that you've created a future that you can handle. Maybe you're insane.

ELAINE

This isn't real! I want answers. I need answers.

RUSSELL

So many questions.

ELAINE

Why did you kill yourself?

RUSSELL

That's not the question.

ELAINE

Why didn't you leave a note?

RUSSELL

Nope.

ELAINE

Why did you blame me?

RUSSELL

Warmer.

ELAINE

How could you say it was my fault?

RUSSELL

I didn't.

*Beat*

ELAINE

Why do I think it was my fault?

RUSSELL

There it is.

ELAINE

What did I do?

RUSSELL

A friend of mine told me that our breaking point only comes once. If we ignore it, we lose the ability to change.

ELAINE

Did you break?

RUSSELL

That's not important.

ELAINE

If this is all an illusion, why can't I go back to yours? Why can't I help you?

RUSSELL

Because...it's your turn. Will you break?

ELAINE

No. No, I do not accept this! This is crazy. Even in my imagination you're impossible. Why do I talk to anyone in this family.

*Elaine crosses through the kitchen*

ELAINE (Cont'd)

Hi mom.

EDNA

Hello dear.

*Elaine continues into the living room*

TONY

Elaine, I don't know what to do.

ELAINE

I don't know what to tell you, Tony! This is most likely just my attempts at reconciling some kind of delusional fantasy that I've concocted about you and my sister, so that I can face a world in which I may or may not have had a hand in the death of my nephew. So, I don't know Tony! I don't have anything to say to you, except that even in this illusory idea of what my life should be, or perhaps has already been, I am left with the aching knowledge that you are as uninteresting to me in my present delusional state as you've ever been in a real one! I have to go.

*Elaine exits*

TONY

Yeah, okay. Shit.

*Tony lies back down on the couch*

RUSSELL

It's the silences that'll kill ya. Most of life is spent in these moments of waiting. We spend over half of our lives in the

interim, going from one thing to the next. It is quiet, though. Let's skip ahead.

*A doorbell is heard*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

I can never decipher which noise is coming from which subplot.

*Edna and Tony exit*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

Sometimes synchronicity is the only way to travel.

*Tony and Nicole enter the living room  
Russell lies on his bed.*

TONY

Nicole, I told you can't come over here.

NICOLE

I'm tired of being your dirty little secret, Tony.

TONY

You're not my dirty, little secret. Could you be more melodramatic?

NICOLE

Where's your wife?

TONY

She's out.

NICOLE

Oh save it! Elaine told me everything.

TONY

Why would she do that?

NICOLE

She always tells me everything. That's how our relationship works.

TONY

Do you tell her everything?

NICOLE

Live in fear, Tony. Live in fear.

TONY

What do you want?

NICOLE

Why have you been ignoring me?

TONY

I haven't. I've been busy. I don't know why!

NICOLE

Are you just sitting here waiting for her to come back to you? That's pathetic.

TONY

Why are you here?

NICOLE

Why do you think? Wow. You really don't see it. I'm right here. I'm the one who's here. Why do I have to work so hard to get anywhere with people? Why can't they just meet me halfway?

TONY

Nicole, I don't want to talk about this.

NICOLE

Five years, Tony! We're not talking about some one night stand. This wasn't a weekend stray from your happy marriage! This is...oh my god.

TONY

What?

NICOLE

This is the longest relationship I've ever had. I've never made it to the five year mark with anyone else. They either run off with someone or kill themselves. And then, there's you, the one who was never really there. That's it, right? You've never really been in this, have you?

TONY

Why are you asking me this now? I'm a little upset, given the circumstances.

NICOLE

How did I get here?

TONY

I think that's a good question for both of us.

NICOLE

I don't even like you. How could I let myself become susceptible to any kind of vulnerability with a man who buys his socks at the grocery store?

TONY

What about me? I'm still working through my mother issues! Why else would denigration and emasculation still turn me on?

NICOLE

Oh my god! If I could go back to the moment when I decided this was a good idea, I would go back there and punch myself in the face!

TONY

You think I like this?

NICOLE

Do you ever not say the wrong thing?

TONY

Me? You just made fun of my socks and said you don't even like me.

NICOLE

And yet, despite every fiber of my being screaming in protest, I have developed some kind of sick attachment to you. There's a diseased part of my brain that is convinced I need you! Just saying the words makes my mouth taste like vomit.

TONY

And I'm turned on. How do you think it feels to want to fuck someone who's disgusting? I love my wife.

NICOLE

That...that right there, that's...(beat)

TONY

What?

NICOLE

That's why she left. Of course. She's the only sane one in this sickening triangle.

TONY

Who?

NICOLE

Who? Your wife, you moron! I mean I can't believe I ever thought you would leave her, but knowing what a wretched maggot you are, it only makes sense that she would leave you.

TONY

Do you want to continue this in the bedroom?

NICOLE

What is wrong with you?

TONY

Well, if you're going to get all bitchy and mean, we might as well enjoy ourselves a little.

NICOLE

Sex with you is not something I enjoy. It's a perfunctory obligation that I have grown accustomed to, in-between thoughts of morbidity and despair.

TONY

Are we breaking up, then?

NICOLE

What is this high school? You don't want to go steady anymore?

TONY

Well shit, I can't say anything without being attacked.

NICOLE

Who's attacking!

TONY

Why are you even here? Did you come to tell me how disgusting I am? You could have done that over the phone.

NICOLE

You are disgusting!

TONY

Then leave!

NICOLE

I can't!

TONY

Why not?

NICOLE

Because I'm in love with you, you fucking idiot!

TONY

What?

NICOLE

Don't gloat. I hate myself. I used to have this image of who I was, of who I would become, and I could see her in the future as clearly as I can see you standing in front of me now. I had a very specific idea of who I would be. And I always imagined when I got to that place, to that picture, to that future I would know what to do next. Well, this isn't the picture, Tony! That woman that I was, that woman that I was supposed to be, I don't know where she is! I don't see her anymore. Now, I see this flailing mess of desperation. I'm one of those women I've always hated, standing in front of a man all wrapped up in feelings of what the future might be without him. You're in the picture now, and that makes my fucking skin crawl.

TONY

I didn't know—

NICOLE

What difference does it make?

TONY

Why haven't you said any of this before?

NICOLE

Because I can't take anymore.

TONY

Anymore what?

NICOLE

I can't change the picture again. I can't take another loss.

TONY

I'm sorry.

NICOLE

Oh God! This is what I get for involving myself with a man who has no balls! Is there any way that you could say something that doesn't stem directly from your cowardice? Seriously, anything? You're standing upright so I can safely assume that you have a spine—

TONY

What do you want from me?

NICOLE

I want to know what you want from me!

TONY

I want you to change the picture.

*Beat*

NICOLE

What?

TONY

Whatever future you see, take me out of it. Because no matter how much you think you feel for me, it's nothing compared to what I feel for my wife.

NICOLE

And these past five years, what was all that?

TONY

Confirmation. A reminder of what I should do.

NICOLE

I don't think you could have said anything worse. Thank you for your honesty.

TONY

Are you crying?

NICOLE

You really think I would give you that satisfaction?

TONY

It's just a bad time, it's just a really bad time.

NICOLE

Go to hell, Tony.

*Nicole exits*

TONY

Nicole, wait. I didn't mean it. Nicole!

*Tony exits*

RUSSELL

What if the future is just as determined as the past? The silences get longer and longer, and I try to fill them with exquisite pontification. Lesson number one: Time, mass, and length all transform according to velocity. Therefore, space and time are an integrated continuum, duh! However, if the sums of the parts are equally out of control, then where does our will to go on come from? Enter the voice of reason.

*Jack (40's) enters the living room.*

JACK

Space and time arc in the presence of mass.

RUSSELL

Bending to its supreme will.

JACK

This creates a panic in the linear notion of time.

RUSSELL

And so the world is thrust into chaos.

JACK

Beautiful...

RUSSELL

Terrifying...

JACK & RUSSELL

Chaos.

*Melissa enters the living room*

MELISSA

What? Sorry, I was just seeing if my husband was here. He's not. He must be at work. Sorry, what were you saying? My mind wanders sometimes. Maybe I'm too stupid to get this.

JACK

Maybe is just a fearful reaction to the truth.

MELISSA

Seriously, I'm a borderline alcoholic, socialite with bad posture.

JACK

And yet you sought out the unfamiliar. What were you looking for?

MELISSA

I don't know.

JACK

Why are you tense?

MELISSA

I don't know. It's probably this house. Being back here, it makes me think of things.

JACK

What do you fear more than anything else in the world?

MELISSA

Gosh, how much time do you have?

JACK

Tell me.

MELISSA

Spiders?

JACK

Tell me.

MELISSA

I don't know. Death, I guess. No, pain. That's probably a generic answer, isn't it?

RUSSELL

Consider the source.

JACK

You're letting the world in again. You have to stop that. This is the only moment that matters. What do you feel right now?

MELISSA

Nervous.

RUSSELL

Nauseous.

JACK

Everything in the universe exists all at once. We don't have to fear anything. We are the answers we seek, and the questions.

RUSSELL

Wow! The vagueness of this guy is staggering.

MELISSA

I don't know how to do what you do, Jack. How do you do it?

JACK

You have to understand that all of life has already been lived. We are alive, and dead, and unborn. We must renounce the material world, and get back to existing as we should. Free.

MELISSA

You're so wise. But, why do you have to live on the street?

JACK

I gave up the material world. My mission in life is to enlighten those who will be enlightened. Those who understand the impermanent eternalness of time will rise up, and together we can share the experience of being alive and dead.

RUSSELL

A murder-suicide! That's the first good idea he's had yet.

JACK

Who is that?

MELISSA

Who?

RUSSELL

He's talking about me. I'm having one of those pseudo-hallucinatory moments and he's pissing me off.

JACK

He's the reason you started this, isn't he?

MELISSA

Yes, he's been trying to tell me something from the other side.

RUSSELL

The other side? What is this Poltergeist?

JACK

And what is he trying to tell you?

RUSSELL

That you're full of shit! He's full of shit.

JACK

Why should I instill such hostility in a young man I've never even met.

RUSSELL

Because you're full of shit! I thought I made that clear.

JACK

What does he tell you?

MELISSA

I don't know, it's hazy. Something about Einstein.

JACK & RUSSELL

Einstein is Alive.

MELISSA

I still don't know what that means.

RUSSELL

It doesn't mean anything.

JACK

It means everything.

RUSSELL

I died on Einstein's birthday. Ooh spooky!

MELISSA

How can it mean everything?

JACK

The present...the now, is all we have. If you look back you can't move forward.

RUSSELL

I think that's a campaign slogan.

JACK

He's not real.

RUSSELL

Hey, fuck you, buddy!

JACK

He represents a present that he can't escape from. You've tapped into a frozen moment. His moment, not yours.

RUSSELL

A frozen moment?

MELISSA

He's trapped?

JACK

He's dead. Surviving our physical death is impossible.

MELISSA

What about the soul?

JACK

There is only ego. Our ego must believe that we go on; otherwise, our actions may reflect impermanence.

RUSSELL

Doesn't impermanence already reflect our actions?

JACK

And in our actions there is a sense of what will follow.

MELISSA

And what is that?

JACK

The natural order. The world is like a strip of celluloid, tiny images imprinted into the delicate skin, moving in a continual order that was captured long before anyone observed it.

MELISSA

So, whatever is going to happen...

RUSSELL

Will happen.

JACK

We are powerless to stop it.

RUSSELL

Wow. He's deep. He should teach a seminar in mental masturbation. So what the fuck does Einstein is alive mean, then? How can Einstein be alive if we can't survive our physical deaths?

JACK

All of time can be visible from any point A to any point B. Like a fingerprint, life is left behind after we touch it. We can observe anything we want. Time is irrelevant.

RUSSELL

Wait a minute! If time is irrelevant, then how are we having a discussion in two different times?

JACK

We're not.

RUSSELL

Oh we're not? That's your answer? Why didn't I think of that?

JACK

All of life has been laid out before you, you are conversing with an aspect of a different time, but the time is within you. Your present is our past, but my present is not your future. There is an order, and the divinity that shapes that order cannot be broken.

RUSSELL

That is nothing but Swiss cheese philosophy.

JACK

It is the truth. We are merely imagining you as you lived.

RUSSELL

What makes you think I'm not imagining myself as I died?

JACK

You are.

MELISSA

Oh, because of the holes in it! *(Beat)* Sorry, I just got the Swiss cheese thing.

RUSSELL

Hey, if you want to believe that all of life is planned out for us and that we have no control—

JACK

This isn't about what I believe. You had your chance. You discarded faith as hysteria, and science as incomprehensible, and therefore the choice that you made was to disconnect from the world. Now, it is in the hands of someone else. This is the now.

RUSSELL

Okay, here's why he's full of shit. He preaches this "knowledge" as fact, when in reality he's just as trapped in a time as I am. The now isn't the now you think it is. If my now is now for me, and your now is now for you, then one of the nows is then and the other is next. Now, you know that now can't be then or next, if it is actually now. So you must be in the future now from where I am then, in a now that is before your now, and vice versa. If that is the case, then epistemologically speaking there is a now that rests between us, where the actual decisions can be made...now.

MELISSA

Wait, what now?

JACK

You're wrong.

MELISSA

How do you know?

JACK

You believe him?

MELISSA

No, I mean how do you know what he said?

JACK

He's from the school of thought that the past and the future are already set, and that only the present time can have a say in either of them.

MELISSA

I don't understand. Isn't this the present day? How can I be aware of what's going on, if it's not really going on?

RUSSELL

Isn't that how you've always lived your life?

JACK

He's too limited. He doesn't understand the awesome power of action.

RUSSELL

And he's a douchebag who doesn't understand the awesome power of reason.

JACK

The world is made up of these moments.

RUSSELL

Breaking points.

MELISSA

I don't know what that means.

JACK

The moment when you choose to become something different.

RUSSELL

When you can't turn back.

MELISSA

What am I supposed to do?

RUSSELL

Nothing. This isn't in your control.

JACK

You have to choose.

MELISSA

I do.

TONY (O.S)

Melissa!

RUSSELL

Here's your chance, sweetheart. Make it count.

JACK

I'll be right here.

*Tony enters the living room*

TONY

Melissa, I thought I saw your car. Where the hell have you been?

MELISSA

I've been eradicating my emotional attachments, Tony.

TONY

Huh? Who's this guy?

JACK

I am her spiritual interpreter. I change the future.

RUSSELL

With really bad clichés, and tired lines! He's sort of like a human bin for metaphysical compost.

MELISSA

Don't come any closer to me. I have no intention of engaging in physical violence.

TONY

I'm not going to be violent.

MELISSA

No, but I might. You can no longer control my emotional responses. I am free to act in whatever way I see fit.

TONY

Okay. Why are you talking like this?

JACK

The universe grants powers to those who take them.

RUSSELL

That's telling him!

MELISSA

You controlled everything, Tony. You tried to trap me in your warped reality, but now I've seen past all of that. I've seen the limitations of your narrow mind, and I'm eradicating myself of all the poison you've forced upon me.

TONY

Seriously, did you join a cult?

JACK

The unenlightened will always accuse the rest of us of being peculiar, even abnormal.

MELISSA

You don't like it, do you? My voice isn't yours anymore. Well too bad! This is the voice I like!

TONY

Melissa, can't we just talk like two normal people?

MELISSA

That would be a first.

TONY

Why are you acting like this?

MELISSA

Don't try to find a reason for my transformation, Tony. I am the principle player in this reality, and I reject being your wife.

TONY

So, you're leaving me?

MELISSA

I've already left you. I left you years ago. I just let my corpse hang around for you to feed on. But that is all in the past! I'm off to begin a new adventure, a new door has opened! I'm going to live in the gutter!

TONY

I don't even know how to respond to that.

MELISSA

I'm going off with Jack, here. He is my connection to the universe, my spirit husband, my soul glue, and he has decided that I am his. So, go fuck yourself.

TONY

You're going to run off with a bum?

MELISSA

He's not a bum, you moron! What a crude piece of shit you are.

TONY

He's not a bum? What do you call him?

JACK

I'm a nomadic architect.

TONY

Nobody's talking to you!

*Nicole enters kitchen still in her bathrobe. She is followed by Elaine and Edna.*

NICOLE

What are you doing here?

EDNA

I need to talk to the two of you.

ELAINE

She's obviously upset. Why can't we do this later?

EDNA

No, we'll do it now!

TONY

Melissa, you're having some kind of breakdown. Maybe it's a midlife crisis.

MELISSA

Don't try to stop me, Tony.

NICOLE

I thought I made it perfectly clear that I don't want to talk!

TONY

You can't be serious about this.

JACK

It's beyond your control.

TONY

Get out of my house!

EDNA

Yeah, it's clear because you never want to talk!

ELAINE

What is this even about?

MELISSA

Don't you dare make this about him.

EDNA

What do you think it's about.

RUSSELL

It's about me.

TONY

Is it about us?

MELISSA

Has it ever been about us?

ELAINE

Is it about me?

EDNA

It's about both of you.

NICOLE

Just stop!

ELAINE

You both blame yourselves for Russell's death.

MELISSA

I blame myself.

JACK

No! That's failure. You are not a failure, don't you talk that way.

ELAINE

What?

TONY

I don't understand—

ELAINE

What is going on?

RUSSELL

Chaos.

EDNA

You both live with this terrible crushing guilt. What good can come of that?

NICOLE

Russell hasn't even been in the ground for a week. We are not talking about this.

EDNA

This isn't about you?

TONY

Melissa, this is nuts! You're my wife.

NICOLE

Of course not. It's about you! Everything's about you.

MELISSA

Wrong!

EDNA

Grow up, Nicole, stop blaming your mommy for all your problems! It's really getting old.

NICOLE

You're getting old!

MELISSA

I was your wife. Luckily she's found her way out of my personality.

ELAINE

What is this really about?

NICOLE

What difference does it make? He's dead!

MELISSA

What's the matter, Tony? Did your whore walk out on you, too?

NICOLE

We can't change it. We can't change anything.

TONY

Melissa, I'm so sorry.

MELISSA  
It's too late.

NICOLE  
It's too late.

ELAINE  
It's not too late.

TONY  
It doesn't have to be.

ELAINE  
Mom, why are you so determined to upset her?

MELISSA  
I came here to say goodbye, Tony.

EDNA  
As much as it breaks my heart to say this, I can't forgive him for what he's done.

TONY  
You can't say goodbye.

MELISSA  
Nothing you can do about it.

RUSSELL  
You're trapped.

EDNA  
Suicide is a sin! There are no methods through which we can save him now. And I hate him for that.

ELAINE  
No, you can't say that. It was because of me.

MELISSA  
The order of my life doesn't fit into yours anymore.

TONY  
I don't know what that means.

EDNA  
What do you mean?

NICOLE

Who cares what she means!

EDNA

It was because of you? What was because of you?

MELISSA

It doesn't matter what it means. Say goodbye, Tony.

ELAINE

He died because he didn't want to turn into someone like me, and death was a better option.

MELISSA

Now say goodbye.

TONY

I can't.

NICOLE

Why is everything about the two of you?

JACK

This is bigger than you. This is the moment. This is the reason we are alive. We take these little moments and with them we change the world.

NICOLE

Always about the two of you!

ELAINE

Oh, for fuck's sake! Shut the fuck up, Nicole! This moment isn't even happening, you god damned moron!

*Beat.*

MELISSA

Why are you looking at me like that?

NICOLE

Why are you talking to me like that?

TONY

I can't live without you.

ELAINE

I can't live like this. Look at us. We buried a young man and all we learned from it was how to blame each other. We are collectively fucked in the head!

MELISSA

Well, I can't live with you.

NICOLE

How dare you! Who do you think you are?

ELAINE

This is the real me, Nicole! I'm sorry that it doesn't fit into your fucking fantasized idea of what I'm supposed to be, but you can fucking deal with it.

EDNA

Watch your language.

ELAINE

Oh fuck off, mom! Stop trying to control every fucking minute of my fucking life.

EDNA

How dare you!

ELAINE

How dare you! You withheld your love from me because you knew I wouldn't leave, so you gave it to all the people in your life who took it and ran away. Everyone runs away from you because you're fucking nuts!

EDNA

I won't listen to this.

TONY

Melissa, please.

ELAINE

We're all fucking nuts! I have to go!

EDNA

So go. Who's stopping you?

ELAINE

I am. I can't wait for what happens next.

NICOLE  
Why?

EDNA  
What happens?

JACK  
The chaos envelops all of mankind, and in one instant changes  
the course of life for all.

*A knock is heard*

ELAINE  
It was raining.

NICOLE  
I shouldn't have told him to leave.

EDNA  
What are you talking about?

TONY  
Melissa, think about what you're doing.

ELAINE  
It was a mistake. It was just a stupid mistake.

NICOLE  
I shouldn't have told him to leave the house.

ELAINE  
You shouldn't have gone over to see him.

*Another knock*

MELISSA  
There's someone at the door, Tony!

*Elaine crosses to the living room.*

ELAINE  
I was driving back home when I got the call.

RUSSELL  
Poor sightlines...

ELAINE

Dangerous curve.

RUSSELL

She didn't feel a thing.

TONY

Elaine, what are you doing here?

ELAINE

Nicole is dead.

TONY

What?

MELISSA

Your sister?

ELAINE

She lost control of the car. She ran off the road. She's dead.

TONY

Oh my God.

ELAINE

Why did you let her leave so upset?

TONY

I ran after her...I...I couldn't catch her. I just wandered in the rain. Why didn't I drive after her?

ELAINE

It's too late.

*Elaine enters the kitchen*

EDNA

You cannot feel sorry for someone who ended his life in the hands of something evil.

ELAINE

That's not why I'm sorry.

NICOLE

I shouldn't have asked him to go. If I could change one thing...

TONY

Just one thing...

RUSSELL

Haven't we all tried to stop being who we are?

ELAINE

I'm stuck. I try to imagine a million different scenarios where you don't kill yourself, but I never escape. Even if you live, I don't know how...

RUSSELL

But I don't live...

ELAINE

To get out.

RUSSELL

Do I?

ELAINE

I have to get out. I know what has to happen.

NICOLE

How do we go on?

JACK

We mourn the past, we dread the future, and so we lose the now.

MELISSA

There can only be one.

JACK

One past—

RUSSELL

One future—

ELAINE

One now.

JACK

All of life happens now, and forever changes what happened last, and what will happen next.

*Tony, Melissa, Jack, Nicole and Edna  
exit.*

RUSSELL

The hour is approaching...the last bloom. The grandiloquent  
pinnacle, the verbose assault. The point of no return.

*Elaine enters Russell's room*

ELAINE

Russell?

RUSSELL

What are you doing here?

ELAINE

Can I ask you something?

RUSSELL

Is this right now?

ELAINE

What do you mean?

RUSSELL

You sound funny. Where did you come from? Shit, I'm losing track  
of what's happening.

ELAINE

What?

RUSSELL

I said you sound funny.

ELAINE

I'm fine. How are you?

RUSSELL

Oh, I'm great. Just contemplating the universe.

ELAINE

It's a big universe.

RUSSELL

So big.

ELAINE

Kind of makes you feel small, huh?

RUSSELL

So small.

ELAINE

It's a wonder that such obscurity, that seemingly insignificant details can shape our whole world.

RUSSELL

Are they insignificant, or do they just seem that way?

ELAINE

Well, you know the things that are.

RUSSELL

What? Seemingly?

ELAINE

Small.

RUSSELL

I do.

ELAINE

Life is finite, broken and terrible, and we wander in search of truth, for some kind of reason. We wander in a universe that is not finite. But, we can make a choice, Russell—

RUSSELL

I don't think we can.

ELAINE

If you were to do something that wasn't insignificant—

RUSSELL

Something dangerous?

ELAINE

Something substantial.

RUSSELL

It would change everything and everyone. Of course, if your theory is correct, then everyone has a say in everyone else's reality, and that's just a fucking nightmare.

ELAINE

Look at me.

RUSSELL

Look at yourself.

ELAINE

We're the same, Russell.

RUSSELL

I'm nothing like you. Look at you. You're a joke.

ELAINE

That's not true!

RUSSELL

The fuck it's not!

ELAINE

Why are you being so mean?

RUSSELL

You want me dead!

ELAINE

Of course I don't.

RUSSELL

You came here to tell me to get it over with, didn't you?

ELAINE

I would never—

RUSSELL

Get out!

ELAINE

Russell, I think I understand it now.

RUSSELL

Congratulations! Will you please fuck off!

ELAINE

I keep changing the story, I keep making it worse. The more you add the more you lose, it's like this ridiculous cosmic ripple effect—

RUSSELL

I don't want to do this. I've changed my mind. How do I stop this?

ELAINE

I've been stuck in one moment, watching them put you in the ground. Sitting at that fucking kitchen table, playing it over and over in my mind, but I keep making it worse, I watch everyone around me die.

RUSSELL

This isn't me! These are not my thoughts! What are you doing to me?

ELAINE

You have to listen to me. I think I understand what's happening. I think it's me, Russell. I think it's me.

RUSSELL

Get out. Make it stop!

ELAINE

Please, listen to me. I let this go too far. It's not your fault. You can't escape; you can't make a different choice.

RUSSELL

I want you out!

ELAINE

Russell, I can fix this.

RUSSELL

You can't fix it.

ELAINE

This is happening because of me.

RUSSELL

No, no, no, I'm sorry you're joining this program already in progress.

ELAINE

What?

RUSSELL

This is a pre-recorded event.

ELAINE

Russell?

RUSSELL

The ink is dry.

Stop. ELAINE

The ground is settled. RUSSELL

Knock it off! ELAINE

There is no freedom. Say it. Say it out loud. RUSSELL

Stop it! ELAINE

Say it. RUSSELL

No. ELAINE

Say it! RUSSELL

It's not real! ELAINE

For once in your life have the goddamn guts to say something. RUSSELL

I can't! ELAINE

Fucking coward! RUSSELL

I don't know how! ELAINE

Say it! RUSSELL

You have to die! ELAINE

*Pause*

ELAINE (Cont'd)

Russell-

RUSSELL

No. No, don't say anything else.

ELAINE

If I don't go, Russell, if I don't realize that I can only act now-

NICOLE (O.S)

She's not here!

EDNA (O.S)

What do you mean she's not here?

ELAINE

Then all of this will start over, and I'll be trapped in a past and a future that someone else will have a say in. I want to have the say. I want to change the picture.

RUSSELL

So change it. What do you care what I do?

ELAINE

Russell, I've collected an entire lifetime of mistakes, and I've watched myself unravel. I've always felt invisible. Just like you. I've been stuck. If I don't go, I know what horrible things await me in the dark, in this terrible empty room, tucked sweetly away from the cruel world. I don't matter here. I have to find a place where I matter. But, this isn't real, Russell.

NICOLE (O.S)

She left!

EDNA (O.S)

Why would she leave?

ELAINE

I have to go. I wish I could have saved you.

RUSSELL

Do you want to know why I did it?

ELAINE

I already know.

RUSSELL

It's the only way out.

ELAINE

No. No sweetie, there was always another way. I'm sorry that I couldn't show you that way. I'm sorry.

*Elaine exits*

RUSSELL

There's only one way. I'm not ready.

*Tony Enters the living room, Nicole enters the kitchen; the moment is the same as the beginning without Elaine;*

RUSSELL (Cont'd)

Fuck!

TONY

Shit!

NICOLE

Son of a bitch!

**BLACKOUT**

*THE END*